

H.E. Alhakim: Ba'ath Party Poses First Danger to Iraq

Anniversary of the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)



ISCI President and UIA leader, H.E. Sayed Abdul Aziz Alhakim, held a celebration for the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on March 14th, 2009. In attendance were VP Adil Abdul-Mahdi, H.E. Ammar Alhakim, National Security Advisor Muafaq Alrubaie, along with numerous governors and officials.

H.E. Alhakim stated that there had been many attempts to restore the Ba'ath party and allow it to work in Iraq. H.E. Alhakim said that these attempts should not be allowed due to the Ba'ath party's involvement in a plethora of crimes against Iraq and the Iraqi people, and that the Ba'athists were the first enemy of Iraqis and Arabs.

H.E. Alhakim stressed that the Ba'ath party must not be allowed to grow within Iraq and that the view of the Ba'ath party as a "terrorist party" by Iraqis is stated in the constitution. H.E. Alhakim added that we must distinguish between the Ba'ath party and those who were forced to become involved with the party as a means of survival.

H.E. Alhakim reminded the audience that the late Ayatollah Alhakim described the Ba'ath party as "the first danger to Iraq, Islam and all human values." He also considered the Ba'ath party as the main safe haven for Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. H.E. Alhakim pointed out the

need to build up constitutional institutions and to continue the work of rebuilding Iraq in order to bring about a prosperous social and economic life for all Iraqis in the governorates.

The Election Process: Lessons for Review

The results of the governorate elections revealed a much more intense political Iraqi issue, stirring up the political forces for change and preparation for the coming legislative elections. The political scene was characterized by features that pushed the political entities to benefit from the election process in order to enhance their performance. What distinguished this political election was the demand by Iraqi voters for a change of the majority of those running for seats in the governorate administrations. The result was less seats for political entities who supervised the administrations.

This election process clarified the strength of the Iraqi voters in the political process. The voters confirmed that they have the will and awareness to change the political equation. The electorate proved the necessity of paying attention to the priorities on Iraqi streets, in addition to the importance of making election speeches align with the main priorities of the Iraqi voters. The process also demonstrated the importance of large, strong alliances as well as small individual groupings. Even after attaining a high ratio, the large alliance received scattered votes. Votes for the small groups amounted to 60% of the total seats.

This election process highlighted the importance of the role of the media in influencing voters through the airing of election commercials, as well as the psychological pressure on the will of the

Iraqi voters in directing their votes. The electoral commission also had a negative impact on the participation and hence on the outcome of these elections. This was achieved by ignoring the displaced Iraqi population as well as omitting certain candidates from the registration.

ISCI Does Not Seek to Weaken PM Almaliki



H.E. Ammar Alhakim, deputy to the ISCI leader, in a statement made during an interview with Radio SAWA on February 23, 2009, denied that ISCI is seeking to weaken PM Almaliki.

During the interview, H.E. Ammar Alhakim stressed the power sharing principle in ruling Iraq, and stated that ISCI is pleased with its relations with its broad alliances comprised of Kurds, Sunnis and Shiite. He also mentioned that these political forces must have the national will in order to build a constitutional government.

H.E. Ammar Alhakim stated that we need a strong Iraq, and that this would come from strong government institutions and cooperation among the coalitions. In the last provincial elections, he stated that Iraqis want to change the governorates' officials in order to improve their day to day lives, and because of this ISCI will conduct

a thorough review of its political message and performance. ISCI is also seeking to benefit from the lessons of the provincial elections in order to prepare itself for the national elections.

H.E. Ammar Alhakim added that ISCI did not mention the middle and southern federation during the provincial elections, and had ceased talking about it some time ago. ISCI, in fact, didn't mention it until it became a fact after the Regions' law which made federalism a reality. It is ISCI's understanding that proper federation will improve Iraqis' day to day lives, and that the decision lies with the Iraqis. Also, in past elections ISCI talked about decentralization and providing authority to the governorates as outlined in the constitution. However, a strong active government in Baghdad and broad authorities for the governorates was agreed on by the Iraqi political forces.

H.E. Alhakim Visits President Talabani



H.E. Alhakim, ISCI President and UIA leader, visited President Jalal Talabani on March 4, 2009, in his official office. In the meeting they reviewed the current political developments in Iraq.

President Talabani reviewed with H.E. Alhakim the results of his visits to South Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran. President Talabani mentioned that both visits were successful and that the two countries will participate in developing Iraq in different fields.

President Talabani stressed that the visit of Sheik Hashimi Rafsanjani, the Iranian chairman of Experts Council and president of Iranian Interests Council, is an important visit which will boost the International and regional cooperation towards Iraq, as well as increase the cooperation between Iraq and Iran.

H.E. Alhakim Receives Dr. Ibrahim Aljaafari



H.E. Alhakim, ISCI President and UIA leader, received Dr. Ibrahim Aljaafari, the former Prime Minister and president of the Reform Movement, and the accompanied delegation, on March 14, 2009, at his special bureau.

In the meeting they discussed the latest Iraqi political developments as well as the best ways to boost the political process and overcome the obstacles that Iraq is facing.

H.E. Alhakim Receives Bahraini King's Advisor



H.E. Sayed Abdul Aziz Alhakim, ISCI President and UIA leader, received Dr. Muhammad Alsitrie, the Bahraini King's Advisor, and Mr. Sabah Almaliki, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Iraq, and the accompanied delegation, on March 3, 2009, at his special bureau in Baghdad. H.E. Ammar Alhakim attended the meeting as well.

In the meeting, they discussed the brotherly relations between Iraq and Bahrain and the best ways to boost them.

H.E. Alhakim stressed augmenting the relations with our brothers in other Arab countries in order to strengthen their solidarity to achieve goals for security and

economic and social prosperity.

Dr. Alsitrie expressed his contentment in meeting with H.E. Alhakim. He delivered the Bahraini King and the Bahraini people's greeting to H.E. Alhakim, stressing the strong relations between the two countries.

H.E. Alhakim Receives First Deputy of CoR Speaker



H.E. Sayed Abdul Aziz Alhakim, ISCI President and UIA leader, received Sheikh Khaled Alatya, the first deputy of the Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker, on February 24, 2009, at his special bureau in Baghdad.

During the meeting, they discussed the current political developments in Iraq. Sheik Alatya stressed that this visit was meant for collaboration on the political affairs and the discussion in CoR to elect a new Speaker. Also discussed was the 2009 budget which the CoR will pass soon, and set the agenda of United Iraqi Alliance for its coming meeting.

Presidency Council Calls for Activation of Executive Council



The Presidency Council held a meeting on February 22, 2009, headed by President Talabani, with VP Adil Abdul Mahdi and VP Tarik Alhashimi in attendance at the Alsalam Palace.

The leaders discussed the latest developments in Iraq as well as the importance of President Talabani's visit to South Korea to advance bilateral relations.

Also, the presidency Council discussed the result of the Council of Representatives' Speakers elections and how the Supreme Court would handle the situation. Regardless of the Supreme Court's last interpretation, it considered the absolute majority for the attendees, and stressed complete respect of the Supreme Court's decision whatever it may be.

The leaders also focused on activating the previous agreement among the parties as well as the Political Council of National Security and the Executive Council.

VP Abdul-Mahdi Receives Tribal Leaders



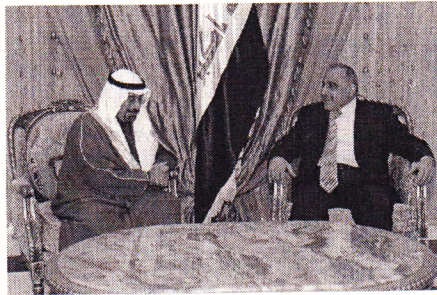
Vice President Adil Abdul-Mahdi received a delegation of Iraqi tribe leaders from the Altaji district north of Baghdad, on March 10, 2009.

The delegation presented a comprehensive review of the social, security and economic situations in their areas which had suffered from Alqadah terror and outlaws.

They also stated that, in spite of the stability, they are still suffering from security forces raids of their homes. They mentioned that members of their community had been imprisoned illegally, and asked for their release because they committed no crimes and were jailed without due process of the law.

Vice President Abdul-Mahdi stressed the necessity of having proper and legal solutions for these problems.

VP Adil Abdul-Mahdi Receives Kuwaiti Deputy PM



Vice President Adil Abdul-Mahdi received Sheikh Muhammad Alsalem Alsabah, the Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Sheikh Alsabah and his accompanied delegation arrived on February 26, 2009.

At the start, Sheikh Alsabah delivered a letter to VP Mahdi from H.E. Crown Prince of the Kuwaiti State. The letter addressed the bilateral relations and suggestions on how to boost relations between the Arab countries. Also included was an invitation from the Kuwaiti Crown Prince to VP Mahdi inviting him to visit the Kuwaiti State.

In the meeting they discussed the best ways to develop bilateral relations and to solve the problems affecting Arab countries by focusing on development and economics.

Sheik Alsabah announced that the first meeting for the Iraqi-Kuwaiti committee regarding the bilateral relations will be held in Baghdad next March.

VP Abdul-Mahdi expressed Iraq's readiness for cooperative relations with the Kuwaiti State and willingness to come up with the best solution for lingering problems, including debts.

Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zybari attended the meeting with several advisors, along with Amb. Ali Almouamen, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq.

Finance Minister Receives European Delegation



Finance Minister Baker Jaber Alzubaidi received a delegation from the European Union (EU), headed by Ambassador Croker Lee, on February 28, 2009.

Minister Alzubaidi stressed that Iraq is keen on developing its relations with the EU and the importance of the EU companies in reconstructing Iraq, building hospitals, power plants, housing units, and oil drilling. Also, he focused on the role of the EU in reforming the Finance Ministry.

Ambassador Lee stressed the EU countries' cohesion with the Iraqi people and that their best will be done to rebuild Iraq and help to engage its economy with the international community.

Sheikh Hamoudi Meets His Korean Counterpart



Sheikh Homam Hamoudi, the Foreign Relations Committee Chairman in the Iraqi Council of Representatives, met with Mr. Park Jin, the Foreign Relations Committee Chairman in the Korean Parliament, on February 24, 2009.

Sheikh Hamoudi, who accompanied President Jalal Talabani during his current visit to South Korea, asked the Korean

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companies to invest in Iraq, and he focused on the current Iraqis' needs. He mentioned the mutual cooperation on the educational side, and the need to establish a friendship committee between the Iraqi Council of Representative and the Korean Parliament. Mr. Jin said that the Korean companies are willing to invest in Iraq, and stressed that Korea is open to any further cooperation.

Minister Alzubaidi Meets with Economic Specialists



Finance Minister Baker Jabor Alzubaidi met with a group of Economic specialists and academics on Feb 19, 2008.

Minister Alzubaidi stressed the importance of supporting the Finance Ministry by appointing the specialists and experts in order to develop the performance of the Ministry. This is an effort to confront the international financial crisis with the dropping prices of oil and its impact on the 2009 Budget.

Minister Alzubaidi reviewed the ministry's efforts to modernize the Iraqi Banks, and to cooperate with the International Banks to back up the investments for the International companies in Iraq. Alzubaidi also mentioned the reform project of the financial managements in Iraq through cooperation with the World Bank, Department of Treasury, the UN DIFD program, and the British foundation for International assistance.

The Iraqi Council of Representatives

In its supervisory and legislative agenda, the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR) is entrenched in intensive activities and heated debates. The CoR confirms that

it has re-established its presence. It has been exercising its role in accordance with the constitution when legislating laws that facilitate the government's work and supervising state institutions. In this case, it prevents the wasting of public funds and corruption, administrative or otherwise.

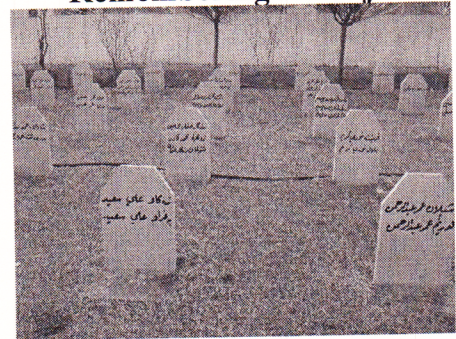
There is still an ongoing debate in the CoR on the issue of electing a new president for the CoR after the resignation of Mashhadani. There is need for a strong president who is able to execute his role in accordance with the constitution. Al-Sumurae received 136 total votes after a decision by the constitutional court granted him the last vote based on the constitutionality, thus it should be decided in the coming days.

Among the important issues in the CoR are the heated debates concerning the 2009 budget. The government's pressure to pass the budget without any amendments is a concern because of the country's deteriorating economic condition due to the dilemma of addressing both falling oil prices and reducing production. This will put the economy in a critical situation in the coming months, especially concerning investments. This is why CoR members claim it is necessary to amend the budget regarding financial allocations for the governorates, and for the reduction of unnecessary expenditures in the presidency of the republic, the prime ministry, and the presidency of the CoR. It also calls for the halt of allocations to unconstitutional organizations.

In brief, the CoR has started regaining its power as a strong government institution through the serious discussions of debated topics. This will allot the CoR more power in order to reach the required balance among government institutions. This is in accordance with what is written in the constitution regarding distribution of authorities and keeping proper checks and balances. This balance of power is crucial and the cornerstone of a fair and functioning democracy.

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Remembering Halabja



On March 16th 1988, Saddam Hussein launched a chemical attack on the mountain town of Halabja, killing some 12,000 people. The attack on Halabja was part of Hussein's attempt to wipe out Iraq's Kurdish population during his Al-Anfal campaign. Even after 21 years, the residual effects of Hussein's genocidal rampage are felt in the mountains of northern Iraq. With the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians as a result of ethnic cleansing, the attack on Halabja should act as a reminder of the devastation of a country divided by ethnic and cultural differences. Iraqis should embrace Iraq's ethnic diversity and push for further reconciliation.

In remembering this tragic event, Iraqis are reminded of their commitment to supporting the construction of a "New Iraq" where horrible events like that of Halabja and murderous despotism are a thing of the past and why it is so important to have a nation that prides itself on its heterogeneous population. Iraq's diversity is a precious resource and it is because of this that reconciliation is such an important issue. Iraqis, Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and other ethnic and religious components need to work together in order to build a better Iraq. With Halabja as a reminder of the consequences of intolerance and hatred, Iraq needs to continue to come together to guarantee that this type of horror never happens again.

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